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J. DURAND, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE TWO GREAT ERAS IN GRECIAN ART.

1. Era from Dædalos to Phidias. 2. Era from Phidias to Hadrian.

FIRST ERA.

FROM DÆDALOS TO PHIDIAS.

PLATO says, "that Egyptian Art, both in its conception and executive genius, maintained its influence for a series "of two thousand years," and he proceeds to prove the literal truth of his assertion by pointing to the little change, which, either for better or for worse, took place in the aspect of the Egyptian works of Art during that immense period of time. There is undoubtedly some truth in Plato's assertion, and we account for it by the subserviency of Egyptian Art to Egyptian religion, which exercised such an intensely conservative and stationary influence upon Art, forcing the artist in the execution of his figures, and in the treatment of their proportions, costumes, and expressions, strictly to adhere to religious rules. As time rolled on, and progress was made in the execution of works of Art, the character of the original conception nevertheless remained the same; and it is this Egyptian conception of imperturbable repose, so symbolical of the whole national, social, and individual life of Egypt, which made such a powerful impression upon Plato's mind. A similar tendency prevailed during the dawn of Art in Greece, when orthodoxy in Art engendered orthodoxy in religion, and every innovation was looked upon as blasphemy. This obtained for nearly a thousand years, from the Pre-Homeric period of Dædalos and his school until the outbreak of the Persian wars. We have related the circumstances under which the foreign, and chiefly Egyptian, spirit of Art was, simultaneously with the ancient Hellenist religious system, engrafted upon the youthful mind of the Grecian state, while the plastic genius of the first Grecian artists—the followers of Dædalos at Attica, Crete, and Rhodes—gave to Art a solid and classic character, and a historical and religious harmony, such as still strike us forcibly in master-works like the reliefs of Selinunt. It must be borne in mind that at that particular time Art still breathed the spirit of the conflicting nationalities that formed the population of the Grecian and Thracian continent; Grecian nationality had not yet developed its Art into the classical

type which characterized it at a more advanced period. Between the creations of Ionian, Cretan, Carian, and Lydian artists of those times there was not any material difference, since all drew inspiration from the same common fountain—a fountain in which the religion and the taste of the people for centuries gave strength, and imparted stability to this system of unity in Art-matters. Hence, in Greece and Central Italy, where the Etrurian population received an influx of Lydian immigrants, we see the same forms of Art oftentimes repeated in spite of the change of latitude and the lapse of time. All these facts corroborate Thiersch's* assertion in reference to the origin of Etrurian and Grecian Art dating from the Pre-Hellenist era.

The operation of a universally accepted religious spirit upon Art is the same in all times. Cimabue and his contemporaries were devout followers of the Byzantine artists, and they manifested the same respect for religious tradition. They stood in awe before the religious sentiments of the community, and would as little have dared to give a more modern interpretation to the popular conception of sacred monuments, as the ancient Hellenist artist would have ventured to make a change in the expression or attitude of one of the people's primitive divinities. The time-hallowed doctrine of the ancient priests who declared any innovation of Art upon things divine to be incompatible with the decrees of the gods, became of universal adoption. This doctrine still prevailed at the time of the Emperor Vespasian, in reference to the ruins of the temple of Jupiter on the capitol, which edifice, with the exception of an addition to its height, was rebuilt according to the style of the old temple, which had been destroyed by fire. The same orthodox spirit led the Jesuits throughout Christendom to build countless churches after the pattern of the dome of St. Peter, and we still find artists haunted by the stereotype standards of Art that have little justification beyond the dictum of bigotry. We must not be surprised, therefore, to find an orthodox spirit controlling the mind of the most ancient Hellenist artists, who were entirely under the omnipotent religious influences of their times, when we find the same spirit in full force at a later period of antiquity, when the Fine Arts had begun to emancipate themselves from its influence.

We arrive, consequently, at the conclusion that until the historical period of the 6th century before Christ, Greek Art clung like that of the Egyptian to the ideal standard intro-

* Thiersch's "Epochen," p. 166.

duced by Dædalos, and to venture upon a change of this would have been nothing short of blasphemy, for in the mind of the ancients an accepted ideal was synonymous with divinity itself. We know that emigrants on leaving their old country provided themselves with faithful representations of their ancient idols, and with accurate models of their temples and sanctuaries; they did so with a view to reconstruct them in their newly-adopted country in precisely the same form, and in accordance with the behests of the gods, "who disapproved of any innovation upon the time-hallowed form of holy monuments." A Spartan priestess, taking it upon herself to improve the appearance of one of the goddesses, by cutting off the old head, and substituting a new head wrought after the style of a comparatively modern art, was, even before she had time to make the same experiment upon another divinity, startled by the vision of a goddess, who imperiously commanded her to desist from her sacrilegious act.

All religious systems substantially imply a subjugation of the will, and this manifests itself by the immovability of established conservativeness. As Greek Art became subservient to religion from the beginning of its career, priestcraft continued to clog its progress, and no where is this clipping of the wings of Art more painfully obvious to this very day than in those works, which, like the Eginetian statuaries, aim to represent the highest embodiment of man's freedom and dignity through the human countenance. It is true, Art received an immense development from the skillful intermingling of ivory with gold, and these with fine woods in the execution of sculpture; from the invention of metal castings, and the substitution of marble for wood and clay; it is true that monuments of Art were created after the close of the first thousand years of the infant religious era, which were even admired in subsequent periods as sublime productions. But still the human countenance remained destitute of character, and shorn of every attribute of soul, continuing to be characterized by that stubborn conventionality of expression, which is the fatal and perpetual mark of the cloven foot of technical religion. No higher development was possible until Art shook off the nightmare of priestcraft: as soon as it emancipated itself from theological influence, the artist began to revel with delight in a new realm of freedom; and it was the inspiration of freedom which gradually formed around Grecian Art such a fascinating halo of beauty. This was a glorious reform; and if antiquity had been appealed to, to name the man who was chiefly instrumental in completing this reform, one mighty echo would have shaken the air of Greece and thundered forth the name of PHIDIAS. Phidias was the man; but the reform was not perfected at once: it required a century. Nearly a century was consumed in the efforts of human genius and freedom to wrest from superstition and priestcraft the sceptre of Art. At the dawn of this great struggle we find the contemporaries of Solon, Diponios, and Scyllis, the last artists of the school of Dædalos, at the head of this new reform movement, giving a powerful im-

pulse to Grecian Art by their own example, and by that of their followers, urging it forward in the paths of freedom and humanity. Gradually Art expands into nobler realms of thought; and fifty years later, under Polycrates and the influence of the Pisistratides, it shakes off altogether the rusty shackles of theological barbarisms. Gitiades, Calones, Critias, Aristocle, Ageladas, and other artists, whose names are endeared to Art history, although none of their works remain to proclaim their glory, appear upon the threshold of this sublime period, which from 570 to 470 before Christ, consummated the wonderful transition of Art from the last works of the last Dædalites to the first colossal creation of Phidias. We cannot refrain from quoting Anselm Feuerbach's remarks on the subject of two antique monuments which belong to this era, viz., the statue of the Athene Promachos, at Dresden, and the massive Apollo Barberini, at Munich. He says that the gods in these statues are no longer mere effects of an aim to reproduce a material image, but they look like gods, and impress you as such.* This criticism tells the wondrous tale of the progress of Art, which, from a soulless conventionality, is developed into a reality full of life and humanity. It is the incarnation of Art, reminding one of the words which the Greek dramatists put in the mouths of their gods, whenever they let them appear upon the stage:

*"Hier bin ich, für dich verliess ich den Seta
Der himmlischen Höhin!"*

(Here am I, for thee left I the realm
Of celestial thrones!)

But, after all, how came the slumber into which Art sunk for a thousand years to be suddenly broken? How came it to pass, that a spirit of humanity stripped the Grecian Art of its conventional character? How was it that the Egyptians, with whom the Fine Arts flourished during so many generations, had not a particle of this vital spirit of humanity, while to the Greeks it was vouchsafed in such a bountiful degree? Was it not surpassingly strange that the Egyptians should for a thousand years and more stultify even the representation of the human face divine, by giving it to the world in the soulless aspect of their stupid divinities, whilst the Greeks have done exactly the reverse, and infused into the forms of their gods a living, breathing, glowing spirit of idealized humanity? History, with all its records of wonders, does not present a more wondrous phenomenon than this—the Grecian effort to throw off, within the short space of one hundred years, the galling yoke of Art petrified by superstition, and to inaugurate the glorious era of Art regenerated by humanity. Does it not seem fabulous, inexplicable, mysterious? One little word, however, unravels the mystery; one little word accounts for the wonder; one little word explains what seems otherwise inexplicable—*Liberty*. That is the magical word—*Liberty*! Not liberty in its demagogical sense; not liberty in the language of Jacobin clubs;

* Vatik Apoll., p. 21.

not the liberty which makes barbarian mobs yell with delight and honest men shudder with fear. But the liberty, such as good and gentle souls pray for, such as poets sing for, such as martyrs bleed for, and such as noble soldiers of humanity fight for, such as angels weep for, such as Jesus of Nazareth died for. Freedom, such as Schiller put into the soul of Posa, such as Posa prayed for, kneeling at the feet of the haughty and gloomy monk-king, Philip II. of Spain. *Freedom of Thought!* which sets the mind of man free and allows it to soar like the eagle in the boundless realms of nature, in science, art, in heaven and earth; which allows it not only to be free, but to realize all the consciousness, the dignity, the divine majesty of a sense of unshackled intellectual and spiritual power. This it is which explains the mystery. This it was which created the gulf between the gagged and enslaved Orient and its foster child the Occidental land of the Hellenists, glowing in thought and feeling, and revelling in freedom. Here, among the Greeks, man first became cognizant of his capabilities; here man awoke for the first time to the exalted character of his earthly mission. This sense of power and dignity, which belongs to man in his fullest creative capacity, as it does to all great, original creative forces of nature, was strengthened by the geographical formation of a country which produced many divisions and sub-divisions of communities, creeds, and traditions, admitting of the utmost independence in every individual branch of the great Greek family, and of the existence of local religious ideas and of a rich variety of local divinities and heroes.

In the Orient, in order to keep up a deadening state of inaction, it was essential to mass the people together like a herd of sheep, under one mighty shepherd, and to keep their thoughts at the minimum degree of stagnation. In Greece progress was the order of the day, and the watchword was given by a healthy conflict of opinions which produced a wholesome fermentation of thought; by the collision of a thousand opposite forces, the mind was provoked into action, and man's brain driven into conflict. Such collisions and struggles with opposite laws and tendencies never struck the rock of nature or humanity, without striking upon some fountain of divine water. But it is mortifying to think that we are only repeating a truism which was much better enounced by a Greek sage, who lived 500 years before the birth of the founder of the Christian system, and who established the proposition that "war," as he called the law of the opposite "was at the bottom of everything;" while he shrewdly adds, "that things are nothing else but drops of water in the river of perpetual motion."

Freedom of thought and free inquiry is the perpetual motion of the spiritual and intellectual spheres; it releases man from the fetters of conventionality, which is ever the fatal heir-loom of bygone civilizations. The mission of introducing this motive power among the nations of antiquity naturally devolved upon the Greeks as the most enlightened

and youthful people of the Occident. Says Thiersch,* "A youth, after having shaken off the dreams and delusions of childhood, scrutinizes with a keen glance the new elements and experiences which present themselves to his mind, and he tramples under foot all old wise saws that dare to interfere with convictions which, once engrafted upon his fresh and plastic heart, are rooted there with an all mighty and indestructible power. He sets about reforming political and social institutions, and the realms of science and art, according to the dictates of his fresh convictions—according to the higher laws of enlightened common sense and such demonstrations of practical wisdom as commend themselves to his penetrating, unsophisticated judgment. This youth, or in other words, this youthful spirit of free inquiry—this always-inspired regenerator of human genius, who, since the dawn of time, has ever made his *début* upon the stage of History in every memorable era—became the leader which brought forward the hosts of humanity to a higher and nobler goal, and a new authority which became also the lawgiver in the spheres of Art, subjecting traditional doctrines to the dictates of the soul, and articles of faith to the code of the mind."

The new spirit of freedom asserted itself at the same time in politics; for simultaneously with the revival of Art, laws of unprecedented and unsurpassed wisdom were conferred upon Greece by Solon. We find the same majestic movement rousing philosophy and science from their long slumber: Thales, Anaximenes, Xenophanes, and Pythagoras appear, and become the progenitors of thought to all succeeding generations. Poets and musicians harmoniously joined the new chorus of freedom, and where all was full of creative and renovating power, how could the Grecian artist resist the Promethean fire, which this intellectual millennium kindled in the bosom of Hellas? Winckelmann, in his immortal thoughts on Grecian Art, bowed reverentially before this genius of Freedom, which by disfranchising the soul of man, lifted up the pillars of Art.

New eras produce new requirements, and these cannot be fulfilled without encountering the stumbling-blocks of customs, that, nearly obsolete, are providentially obliterated by the onward rush of new movements. Thiersch was the first sound thinker to establish the theory of the development of Grecian Art, which under the guidance of his thoughts, we have endeavored to familiarize to our readers, and he dwells particularly upon three great causes which excited a stimulating influence upon the newly awakened genius of Grecian artists. 1st. The greater number of new subjects, created by the greater multiplicity of gods and of divine attributes. 2d. The growing custom of having, in addition to the sacred statuary immediately required for religious services, works of Art to decorate the interior of temples and sanctuaries, as well as to place

* Thiersch, a. a. O. S., 232, 233.

along the avenues and surrounding streets which led to their doors. The *Anathamata*, or consecrated offerings, which the worshippers brought with them, transformed the Grecian temples into so many galleries of Art: richly decorated thrones, gorgeous caskets, helms, tridents and vases, and many other works of Art suggested by the myth and poetry of the country, were thus collected in the temples to answer as glorious symbols of the history of Grecian antiquity. Among the most munificent offerings or *Anathemata* of the kind were the casket of Cypselus made of cedar-wood, gold, and ivory, and the colossal throne of Apollo at Amyclæ. Both these splendid works of Art abounded in beautiful figures, and they were in existence eight hundred years previous to the time when they were seen and described by Pausanias. 3d. The gradual popularity of statues, commemorative of mortals, while previously this homage was only paid to gods. The victors in the sacred games of Olympus, Delphos, and the Isthmus, were the first mortals upon whom the honor of statues was conferred. A Spartan of the name of Eutelidas was the first Olympian hero to whom a statue was erected, 625 years before Christ. Soon, eminent statesmen came in for similar sculptural honors. Hundreds of years later, we find the Athenians for the first time engaged in devising statues for the Tyrannicides, for Harmodios and Aristogeiton, who delivered Greece from the yoke of the Pisistratides.

These three causes contributed to aid Grecian Art in the fulfillment of its new and noble mission. Henceforth we see Art not only officiating as handmaid of Religion, but also as helpmate to humanity; not only executing monuments for technical gods, but also statues for godlike men. We see it blending reverence for the genius of divinities with gratitude for the achievements of humanity. We see the Grecian halls and temples thronged with statues of heroes as well as of gods. This clothed Grecian life with a prestige of grandeur and glory. A historical radiance is reflected over the land by the lustre of works of Art, which are symbolical of the glories of its children. A new era has set in for the world. Religion is made attractive by loveliness, heroism made lovely by grace, and grace dignified by Art, and an enthusiasm for Art is kindled by the inspiration of Beauty. We wholly endorse the fine remark of Thiersch, who says, that "Art became henceforth intimately linked with every high, glorious, and venerable thing and thought in Greece." This influence of Art fell upon a fertile soil; Greece was exulting in its triumphs over the Persians; the mind of the people was intoxicated with glory, and thirsting for lofty associations. Art proposed to assuage this thirst, and the people drank in deep draughts from its æsthetical fountains. The next step of Art was to free itself from the fetters of religious forms consecrated by custom. The multiplicity of new works, and of new ideas, paved the way for this reform. At first the artist ventured only upon slight modifications of old symbols; gradually, in the same proportion as whole families of gods were gathered in temples, where formerly

only one god stood in majestic isolation, the artist found himself more at liberty to exercise his own discretion, since the people had no precedents for many of the new gods, by which to test the orthodoxy of the sculptor, and upon which to base their criticisms. The possibility of a more sweeping reform presented itself as soon as statues to men became popular. As previously gods alone had received this honor, no model existed by which the people might have substantiated a complaint against the artists. Even a progressive artist might, by a certain feeling of reverential awe, shrink from making changes in the settled notions of divine figures; but no such restraint operated upon him in the case of mortals. Here, while studying the imposing head of a vigorous man, or the beautiful countenance of a graceful youth, his genius may soar at will, freed from the shackles of superstitious reverence. This was a new and virgin soil of Art, opening visions and relations of thoughts and things to the artist, which had never been cultivated before. Here Grecian Art parted company with Imitation; here begins its originality: the artist is no longer a student of the hoary models of Egyptian Art, but he puts himself in direct communion with Nature. The scaffold of the old mummeries falls to pieces, and Grecian genius begins to rule in the world of sentiment.

But not at once, only gradually did Art become liberated from the tedious struggles which ever mark the wrestlings of reason with tradition. The progress was but slow. It required a long time before proper proportions could be defined, and true relations established between the real character and the appearances of a countenance; and even after these and many other delicate points had been satisfactorily adjusted by the skill of the artist, there remained still the difficulty connected with the rendering of the sentiment and emotion of humanity, without disfiguring one or the other by the infusion of the unnatural expression of some of the ancient divine figures. This difficulty is obvious in the Eginetian statuary. The character of these and other contemporaneous works of Art was said to be *conventional*, but a definition of this word makes it evident that the appellation was only a diplomatic subterfuge. Instead of confessing straightforwardly, that the work of Art was damned by superstition, the dainty, and maybe revered critics of Athens hinted that it was *conventional*. This difficulty—that of getting rid of theological or mythological associations—tantalized Art for a considerable period. There were still at the time of Phidias artists whose statues were so much imbued with the cloven foot of what delicate critics call conventionality, that some of their representations of living men might as well have passed for one of the wooden gods of the previous era. Even at a later period, when Art had thoroughly emancipated itself from all superstitious influences, wisecracks existed still who swore upon the superiority of the stiff old Egyptian mummy-gods; nay, occasionally the people did not seem to appreciate the new creation of native genius, while it stood spell-bound before the exploded gods of Barbarism.

But sentimental considerations plead apologetically for the appalling ignorance of the people. They loved the good old mummy-gods, not on account of any insane propensity for mummy-gods, but because in worshipping the good old things, they worshiped in their heart their ancestors, who had stood in adoration before the same figures. This excess of sentimental conservatism, was not confined to Greece; it belongs to all peoples and all ages; it belongs to every expression of human nature so long as it is swayed by pure instinct or sentiment, and remains unchastened by enlightened judgment. In all times and all countries religion was the most powerful auxiliary of idolatry. The genius of man alone which created Art was capable of appreciating it, and to worship its divinity by paying homage to its truth and beauty. The development of Grecian Art shows nothing but one long series of struggles of the genius of enlightened men with the superstitions of the ignorant engrafted upon civilization. When this struggle was brought to a happy issue, by the defeat of Ignorance and the triumph of Genius, Phidias and his contemporaries smile upon us from the chaos of the past. They cleansed the Aegean stables of the old era, and became the heroes of the new.

CHAUMONT.

MASSIVE and high—imposing sight!
Lo! Chaumont reareth wall and tower,
With steepled roof upon the height,
Emcompassed round with tree and bower.

The humble village 'neath the hill
Spreads its white houses on the shore,
Beside the river, looking still
To that proud castle hanging o'er.

A pathway, blasted through the rock,
Is open to the lord and swain;
The peasant passeth in his frock,
The seignor with his bann red train.

From top to bottom midway there,
A chapel stands all ivied-brown,
And here to meet in daily prayer,
The serf goes up, the lord comes down.

A little chapel, rich with light
Burnished and mellowed from the glass,
That all the Gothic windows light,
To sanctify the rays that pass!

A common altar for them all,
Thus midway with its open doors—
Below the revels of the Hall,
Above the wailing of the boors—

Apart, and yet amidst it stands;
Going and coming as they pass,
They stop within to fold their hands,
Or hear the chanting of the mass.

And thus it is that every life
Has thoughts that wander to and fro,
At some high shrine with Beauty rife,
They meet together, high and low.

Subservient to one Throne above,
They kneel in harmony of plan;
And Art, the child of God and Love,
Opes wide Heaven's portals unto man!

W.

THE TWO PRE-RAPHAELITISMS.

ARTICLE FOURTH.*

At the conclusion of our last article it was said that we hoped on a future occasion to be able to descant upon the paintings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (in addition to those already mentioned), and the sculptures of Thomas Woolner. This is now afforded, and we shall proceed to complete the series of descriptions of those works which have, up to this time, been produced by the active members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, properly so called.

It was said that the majority of the works of the first-named artists consisted of water-color paintings of the most exquisite description, which, from the nature of their subjects, and the manner of their execution, were peculiarly difficult to treat upon. This is certainly the case; but we shall, however, proceed to render the best account of them which is in our power, begging the reader's indulgence whenever verbal disquisition may fail, which, from the nature of the task, is almost inherent to it. At no time, however, let it be thought but that these drawings are of the most transcendent interest, from their subject as well the way in which that has been, without exception, carried out. The fault will be ours, and not that of the artist, if this paper be not of equal interest, whatever that might have been, with those which preceded it.

Before entering upon our matter in reference to the water-color pictures of Dante Rossetti, let us proceed to describe an oil-color picture of small size, which escaped our notice while treating of the "Girlhood of the Virgin," and the "Annunciation." This is entitled "Kate the Queen." Katherine Cornaro, by birth a noble Venetian lady, became Queen of Cyprus. She renounced the crown, and resided at Asolo, in Venetian Lombardy, where is placed the scene of Browning's drama of "Pippa Passes," which supplies the subject of the picture. At Asolo,

"—— where still the peasants keep
Her memory; and songs tell how many a page
Pined for the grace of one so far above
His power of doing good to, as a queen—
'She never could be wronged, or poor, he sighed,
For him to help her!'"

The picture shows a large chamber, screened from the glare of the Italian summer sun by an arcade and curtains, within which sits the queen with her maidens, a row of whom are seated at embroidery; slightly withdrawn into the picture, at the back is seen a chapel, with attendants preparing for the ministration within; parallel with this, the opening of an arcade shows a sort of corridor, wherein many ladies are engaged in a joyful game of "*jeu de paume*;" a corner of the foreground is occupied by a fountain, by the side of which kneels the fool of the household, busily driving with his breath a paper boat into the spray which falls from the jet in the centre; to the left of this, sits

* See the Numbers of THE CRAYON for August, October, November, and December, 1856.